

NY Lawmakers Hail Senate Hearing on Aid for 9/11 Workers, Survivors

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Washington, D.C. - Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and Reps. Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler, Michael McMahon, and Eliot Engel today hailed the Senate hearing scheduled for this afternoon on the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, legislation that would provide comprehensive health care and compensation for those who are sick or injured because of the 9/11 attacks. Today's hearing is a vital step toward Senate passage of the Zadroga Act; the lawmakers said that they are hopeful that the full House of Representatives will vote on the measure in the next few weeks. Joining Gillibrand, Maloney, Nadler, and McMahon at a press conference today at the U.S. Capitol were 9/11 responders John Feal of the FealGood Foundation and FDNY Lt. Martin Fullam, NYS AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes, UFA President Steve Cassidy, UFOA President Al Hagan, WTC contractor Rich Wood, and Catherine McVay Hughes of Manhattan Community Board 1.

Today's hearing of the Senate HELP Committee will be held at 2:30pm in Room 430 of the Dirksen Building. Testifying at the hearing will be Senator Gillibrand, 9/11 Health Coordinator and NIOSH Director Dr. John Howard, NYS Laborers' Union Health and Safety Director Dr. Jim Melius, FDNY Chief Medical Officer Dr. David Prezant, 9/11 responder and FDNY Lt. Martin Fullam, and Margrily Garcia, a 9/11 survivor and patient at the World Trade Center Environmental Health Center.

"I want to thank Senator Gillibrand for her strong support and leadership on the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act in the Senate," said Schumer. "The bottom line is, though the dust has settled and the ruins of the 9/11 attacks have been cleared away, the physical effects of this attack are still being felt, and in some homes, now more than ever. Thousands upon thousands of thousands of fire fighters, police officers, construction workers, first responders, and other volunteers rushed to Lower Manhattan in the minutes, hours, and days after the planes hit. They went there to save as many lives as possible and its far past time for Congress to provide the healthcare they deserve. I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this bill done."

"We all witnessed the immediate damage done on September 11th, but no one could have known the lasting harm that would be done to the health and well being of thousands of first responders and innocent men, women, and children in New York. Since that day nearly 9 years ago, tens of thousands of heroes have fallen ill due to the harmful toxins released at Ground Zero and many have died," said Senator Gillibrand. "Thousands of New York Firefighters, EMTs, Police, construction workers, clean-up workers, and innocent men, women, and children who lived and worked in the area now face life threatening health ailments and we have an undeniable, moral obligation to provide them the help and treatment they deserve."

"I commend Senator Gillibrand for her leadership in moving the Zadroga Act forward in the Senate and securing today's hearing on the bill. This is a crucial step forward for the legislation," said Rep. Maloney. "I look forward to working with Senator Gillibrand, Senator Schumer, and all our colleagues in the New York delegation as we strive to pass the Zadroga Act by the ninth anniversary of the attacks. I understand that some at today's hearing will say that the current programs to help the heroes, heroines, and survivors of the 9/11 attacks are enough and that we don't need this bill. Nothing could be further from the truth. The heroes, heroines, and survivors of 9/11 need and deserve comprehensive, guaranteed health care and access to compensation. It is truly the least our great nation can do."

"Today, we gather together once again to note the very real and important momentum that our critical legislation, the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, is gaining in both the House and Senate," said Rep. Nadler. "With today's Senate hearing, the long-unsettled issue of 9/11 health is closer than ever before to resolution. For nearly nine years, the government has failed thousands of first responders and survivors of 9/11, and the time to remedy this is now. I want to thank Senator Gillibrand for championing this issue in the Senate. Let's pass this bill."

"In less than three months, we will observe the ninth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks," said Rep. McMahon (D-Staten Island and Brooklyn). "It's been almost a decade, and simply put, that is just too long to wait to give our heroes proper health care. We know what we have to do and we remain committed to the cause. This hearing in

the Senate HELP Committee is just one more step farther down the line to achieving our goal. And we will succeed this year in passing the bill that gives the heroes and heroines of 9/11 the health care and compensation they need and deserve. As Freshman Whip, I am working closely with Speaker Pelosi and the Democratic leadership to get a vote on this important legislation as soon as possible to help our brave first responders. I thank my colleagues in the House and Senate for their continued work and support of this issue."

Congressman Eliot Engel, a senior member of the Health Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee, said, "September 11 was a tragedy not only for New York, but for the entire nation. And now it is long overdue for Congress to come to aid of first responders, their families, and the people from the neighborhood whose health has deteriorated badly over the years. They were told by their government that it was safe to live and work there. We cannot help those already lost, but we must help the thousands who are sick. We must do what is right and show them that their selflessness is shared by the rest of the nation. I look forward to the Senate following the action of the House and approving this legislation and to President Obama signing it into law. It is certainly long overdue."

"Words alone cannot express my gratitude, and I think I speak for the 9/11 community when I say thank you to the whole NY delegation for championing our cause," said John Feal. "But it is the resolve of the 9/11 responders, the widows, and those affected by 9/11 along with my own personal injury that keeps me coming back to DC to push this bill. My team and I have made enough trips to DC the past few years to circumnavigate the Earth for our brothers and sisters who simply can not make this grueling trip because of their serious illnesses. We stand fast with Rep. Maloney and Sen. Gillibrand and we remain confident that HR847 and S1334 will get passed. Failure is not an option!"

"Today's hearing is another step toward gaining justice for our heroic 9/11 first responders. I am greatly encouraged that the Senate will be holding its first hearing on the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. I want to thank Congresswoman Maloney and Congressman Nadler for their leadership on this issue. And I'd like to thank Senator Gillibrand for her efforts on behalf of these heroes, and for holding today's hearing," said Denis Hughes, President of the New York State AFL-CIO.

Stephen Cassidy President of the Uniformed Firefighters Association (UFA) said, "New York City Firefighters are sick and dying in record numbers from the toxic stew at the World Trade Center site. Medical records show firefighters lost an average of 12 years lung capacity; over 100 who responded have since died due to cancers, lung disease and more; while disabilities have ended the careers of over 1,600 firefighters. America must support and recognize the selfless actions of its first responders and send a message to those who will be asked to respond to future attacks on our nation."

"Those that live, work, and go to school in Lower Manhattan thank Senator Gillibrand for calling today's very important hearing on the 9/11 Health Bill. Today we will hear the voice of a 9/11 survivor whose story, like so many others, illustrates how much 9/11 has affected our health -- and how urgently we need a federally funded survivor program to provide specialized medical care," said Catherine McVay Hughes, Manhattan Community Board 1 Vice Chair.